



Grilling for July 4th More Affordable This Year



AFBF's Newton on Results of Summer Marketbasket Survey

A cookout of Americans' favorite foods for the Fourth of July, including hot dogs, cheeseburgers, pork spare ribs, potato salad, baked beans, lemonade and chocolate milk, will cost slightly less this year, coming in at less than \$6 per person, says the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Farm Bureau's informal survey reveals the average cost of a summer cookout for 10 people is \$55.07, or \$5.51 per person. The cost for the cookout is down slightly (less than 1 percent) from last year.

"This is a very tough time for farmers and ranchers due to low prices across the board. It is appropriate that this very painful situation hitting farmers be reflected at the retail level as well," said AFBF Director of Market Intelligence Dr. John Newton. "We are seeing record meat and dairy production in 2018 so that has also influenced retail prices and so, for consumers, this year's Fourth of July cookout costs will be slightly less than last year's."

AFBF's summer cookout menu for 10 people consists of hot dogs and buns, cheeseburgers and buns, pork spare ribs, deli potato salad, baked beans, corn chips, lemonade, chocolate milk, ketchup, mustard and watermelon for dessert.

"Milk production in 2018 is projected at a record 218 billion pounds, contributing to lower retail milk prices," Newton said. While fluid milk prices have declined, tighter stocks of American cheese contributed to slightly higher cheese prices, he added.

Competition in the meat case continues to benefit consumers through lower retail prices,



making grilling for July Fourth even more affordable for consumers this year, according to Newton.

A total of 96 Farm Bureau members in 28 states served as "volunteer shoppers," checking retail prices for summer cookout foods at their local grocery stores for this informal survey.

The summer cookout survey is part of the Farm Bureau marketbasket series, which also includes the popular annual Thanksgiving Dinner Cost Survey and two additional surveys of common food staples Americans use to prepare meals at home.

The year-to-year direction of the marketbasket survey tracks closely with the federal government's Consumer Price Index report for food at home as both the index and the marketbasket remained relatively flat compared to year-ago levels.

As retail grocery prices have increased gradually over time, the share of the average food dollar that America's farm and ranch families receive has dropped.

"Through the mid-1970s, farmers received about one-third of consumer food expenditures for food eaten at home and away from home. Today, farmers receive approximately 14.8 cents of every food marketing dollar, according to the Agriculture Department's revised Food Dollar Series. However, after accounting for the costs of production, U.S. farmers net 7.8 cents per food dollar." Newton said.

Using the "food at home and away from home" percentage across-the-board, the farmer's share of this \$55.07 marketbasket would be \$8.15.

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The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is a non-profit organization representing nearly 6,000 family members across the Commonwealth. MFBF is an advocate for farmers, run by farmer members who develop policies through its grassroots process. Its mission is "to protect the rights, encourage the growth, and be of service to its members, in the best interest of agriculture."

For more information about the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, please visit www.mbf.net.

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